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LODGE

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SMITH MASONIC LODGE

(Compiled by Rev. T. S. Dunaway at the Request of the Lodge)

In the year 1873 Most Worshipful John R. Purdi, M. D., Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, made a carefully prepared sketch of this lodge, of which he was an honored member, from its beginning to that date. Later, Brother R. S. Thomas prepared a short paper, giving additional information as to the building and lot. When the writer of the present sketch took up the task assigned him, it was his full intention to publish the sketch of Bro. Purdie, without alterations; right after this, also, the paper of Bro. Thomas; and then to publish, along with these an independent sketch embracing the years 1873 to the present date. As this however, would see to be somewhat of a patchwork, lacking unity, it appeared better to write one connected account, from the institution of the lodge down to the present time, giving full credit to Brethren Purdie and Thomas for the material furnished by them. The history of the lodge down to 1873 is herein given almost in the very language of these brethren, such changes being introduced as were necessary to give unity to this sketch as a whole.

Date of Organization.

On June 23, 1777, in the City of Williamsburg, Va., there was held a convention of five lodges, holding charters under foreign grand lodges. This convention offered to our brother, George Washington, the honor of being the first Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, as he was the first in the hearts of all true Masons; but he declined the honor at that time. At an adjourned convention of the craft held in Williamsburg, October 13, 1778, there were present fifteen delegates from four lodges that held charters from foreign grand lodges. Among these fifteen delegates were James Willison, James Belschus and John Crawford, from Cabin Point Royal Arch Lodge, in Surry County. On this occasion the Grand Lodge of Virginia was organized; and Right Worshipful John Blair, P. M. of Williamsburg Lodge, was elected and installed the first Grand Master of Masons in Virginia.

Only nine years after its establishment, that is, at a half yearly grand communication, holden in the City of Richmond, on the 28th day of October, 1787, present M. Wor. Edward Randolph, G. Master; R. Wor. William Waddill, G. Secretary, etc., a petition signed by J. Van Wagennan, Thomas Smith, Solomon Wilson, Patrick Ron-
lson, Thomas Pierce, George Robert-
son and Charles Fulghum, prayer for
a charter to hold a Lodge in Smith-
field, Isle of Wight County, was pre-
sented and referred to a grand com-
mittee of the whole. October 29, 1787,
the grand committee submitted a re-
port recommending that a charter do
issue to Jas. Belschus as Master; G.

ent charter explains that the original almost illegible, is deposited in the Grand Secretary's office, and a duplicate issued 27th December, 1810," signed, "W. H. Fitzwhylson, G. S." The following is an extract from an official paper in the archives: "The first meeting was held on the 4th day of March, 1788, and the officers installed by Bro. Gardner Fleming. (Signed) Thomas Smith, Master; Frances Young, Secty." Thus it will be seen that the Smithfield Union Lodge No. 18 was organized exactly one year to a day before the inauguration of our Brother George Washington as President of the United States.

Building and Lot.

The Masonic Hall of Smithfield is situated on lot No. 26, Mason Street. In 1752 there was situated on this lot a one-storied brick building, thirty by eighteen feet, with a gable roof. It was the property of Arthur Smith II, Who caused this building to be erected is unknown, but it has been in consecutive use by the Masons for over 124 years, or ever since the lodge was three months old.

In 1753 Mrs. Elizabeth Smith, wife of Arthur Smith II, donated 125 pounds to Joseph Bridges, Miles Carey and Richard Kello, in trust for the establishment of a free school in this town, provided that the principal of the school should always be a clergyman of the Church of England. The following year her husband, Arthur Smith II, gave a deed-conveying to the trustees of this school lot No. 26, its tenement, etc. The necessary changes were made in the building, and it was used for school purposes so long as the trustees could secure a clergyman of the Church of England as teacher. When troubles rose, so that this condition could no longer be met, the property under special covenant, reverted to Mrs. Elizabeth Smith. In 1761 the will of Mrs. Smith was admitted to probate. It made her son, Thomas Smith, residuary legatee, which bequest included her interest in Lot No. 26.

On June 6, 1788, on motion of Wm. Hardy, Gent., the County Court House of Isle of Wight made an order granting the use of the building known as the Free School House, on Lot 26, to "the Free and Accepted Masons of Smithfield Union Lodge No. 18," the building to be known as the "Mason's Hall," provided they enlarge the building in a certain specified manner, and paid to Richard Kello, surviving trustee, an annual rent of one shilling current money, at the next stated communication a committee was appointed, who contracted with William Jordan to execute the required additions. A receipt of Richard Kello, surviving trustee of Elizabeth Smith, for rent, dated March 11, 1789; the contract with William Jordan; his receipt in full; and the reciprocal bonds of all parties, are all on file in the archives of the lodge.

Fellow Craft. The mechanism was that of Bro. Rouse, while the mahogany wood of which they were made was secured by Brother Wrenn, having once been a part of the Confederate war steamer Florida. These are the working tools still in use for this degree. The tiler's sword now in use was presented by Bro. John Gwaltney in 1875. Our deacons' rods were the gift of Bro. K. K. Chapman in 1877.

On the day of organization, March 4, 1788, seven persons petitioned for initiation. Before the first of Jan., 1800, the names of 84 Masons had been enrolled. The present membership is 100, with the following officers:

Carl Beal, Master.

Ray Barlow, Sr. Warden.

Junius Batten, Jr. Warden.

Jack Roberts, Sr. Deacon.

Clinton Joyner, Jr. Deacon.

Dudley Batten, Tyler.

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On Dec. 3, 1788, the contract having been satisfactorily fulfilled, the keys were delivered to the committee, and the lodge took possession of the hall. From that date to this it has been uninterruptedly held and used by the Masons of Smithfield. A clear title was not obtained until 1816; this was altered in 1819, so as to convey the property to the then present members jointly, in trust, for the use and behoof of the Smithfield Union Lodge No. 18. From that time to the present no alteration has been made in the title papers, except from time to time to change the names of the trustees, on the death of those who had held that office. Various improvements have from time to time been made in the old building.

In 1873, Bro. William G. Rouse and Bro. Virginius Wrenn presented to the Lodge a set of the working tools of a

gift of Bro. K. K. Chapman in 1877.

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